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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Marcie Lawson

 573-471-2498

**Sikeston Launches Campaign to Encourage Wearing Masks**

SIKESTON, MO – The City of Sikeston and the Sikeston Regional Chamber of Commerce have joined forces to encourage those working, dining, shopping and visiting Sikeston wear a mask to slow the spread of COVID-19. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services recommend face coverings whenever in public to limit the spread of COVID-19.

“Wear Because We Care” is the theme of the public awareness campaign by Sikeston city government. The Sikeston Regional Chamber and community healthcare providers have also joined together to support this campaign. “We would like to encourage the people of Sikeston wear a mask when out and about in the community,” said Jonathan Douglass, city manager, Sikeston. “Social distancing is also encouraged, but when that is not possible, wearing a mask helps reduce transmission.” Douglass added this is not a mandate from the City of Sikeston. “The Sikeston City Council is concerned about the number of COVID-19 cases reported in Scott County and by Missouri Delta Medical Center.”

As of December 16, the Scott County Health Department reported 3,263 cases diagnosed with 52 deaths. Currently there are 804 active cases in the county.

The campaign will involve business, industry and public venues asking visitors to “wear because you care.” “The Chamber gladly joined the City of Sikeston in this campaign because studies show that masks not only save lives they also increase economic activity by instilling confidence in residents to shop local and in-person,” said Marcie Lawson, executive director, Sikeston Regional Chamber of Commerce. “The awareness campaign will provide support to those who encourage mask wearing by using the Chamber’s resources through social media, member communications, decals, mask giveaways and other forms of support.”

The Scott County Commission provided funding for 500 masks to the Sikeston Regional Chamber of Commerce to use during the campaign. These masks were purchased through CARES Act funding from the federal government. “These masks will be made available to organizations who want to join our campaign,” added Lawson.

A task force of local healthcare professionals, the City of Sikeston and the Chamber of Commerce was formed to examine best practices in wearing masks, social distancing and how to best communicate that to the Sikeston community.

“I wear a mask to protect you. Please wear one to protect me,” added Andrew Boldrey, MD, Ferguson Medical Group, and member of the local task force. “There is the element of protecting our patients, family, friends, neighbors and social responsibility.”

For more information in the “Wear Because You Care” campaign, contact Lawson by email at marcie.lawson@sikeston.net or the Sikeston Regional Chamber at 573-471-2498.

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